



New Hampshire Secretary of State

Division of Archives and Records Management

PROCEDURES MANUAL

Purpose

The New Hampshire Constitution – Part Second, Article 68 – requires “The records of the State shall be kept in the office of the Secretary.” To help achieve this purpose, the legislature adopted RSA 5:27 creating the Division of Archives and Records Management in the Department of State, under the executive direction of the State Archivist.

As recognized by the legislature through adoption of RSA 5:40, it is important that procedures are in place to ensure proper archival preservation and records management reflecting current best practices. These procedures are detailed in this manual. Such procedures and any subsequent revisions, when approved by the Governor and Council, shall be binding upon all officers and employees of the state. This manual will be reviewed annually, and any changes will be brought forth to the Governor and Council for approval.

Definitions

Agency: Per RSA 5:29, agency means, “any department, office, commission, board, or other unit, however designated, or the executive branch of state government.”

Archives: Per RSA 5:29, the term archives means, “records having permanent or historical value.” This term is used interchangeably in this manual with archival records to refer to the subset of the larger pool of records that are historically significant and thus permanently retained, and available to the public through the NH State Archives. The term permanent record applies to both agency records and public archival records, with the point in time that the records shift from the former to the latter category being defined on a case-by-case basis.

State Archives: refers to the State of New Hampshire’s archival collection, The Division of Archives and Records Management under the Secretary of State.

Archivist, State Archivist, or Director: These three terms, used interchangeably in this manual, refer to the State of New Hampshire’s Director of the Division of Archives and

Records Management. Use of these terms in this manual may also refer to State Archives employee(s) appointed by the State Archivist to act on his or her behalf.

Disposition: The final step in the planned retention of a record. Disposition is generally physical destruction.

Division: The Division of Archives and Records Management in the NH Department of State.

Record: In RSA 5:29, Record is defined to mean any “document, book, paper, manuscript, drawing, photograph, map, sound recording, video recording, electronic record, microform, or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or in connection with the transaction of official business. Library and museum material made or acquired and preserved solely for library use or exhibition purposes, extra copies of documents preserved only for convenience or reference, and stocks of publications and of processed documents are ‘nonrecord materials’ and are not included within this definition of records.”

We interpret this definition to include documents created or preserved in any number of formats, including (but not limited to) paper, parchment, linen, microfilm, photographs, and/or electronic files. We further define different types of records in this section.

Records Center: The storage facility/building that houses the New Hampshire State Archives and Records Management Division.

State Records: Per RSA 5:29, these include:

1. A record of a department, office, commission, board, or other agency, however designated, of the state government;
2. A record of the state legislature;
3. A record of any court of record, whether of statewide or local jurisdiction; or
4. Any other record designated or treated as a state record under state law.

We interpret this to mean those records created by, submitted to, or owned by the executive, legislative, judicial branches, and any other agencies of the State of New Hampshire which document decisions, actions, or obligations of state government or contain information on which actions or decisions are based. This definition specifically excludes Local Records as defined below.

Local Records: Per RSA 5:29, Local Record means a record of any county, city, town, district, or authority or of any public corporation or political entity whether organized and existing under charter or under general law, unless the record is designated or treated as a state record under state law.

Active Records: State records which are used frequently by the creating agency.

Inactive Records: State records which are used infrequently by the creating agency.

Nonarchival Records: Those records that do not have the permanent value of archives and are thus subject to disposal at some point in the future consistent with state law.

Electronic Records: Per RSA 5:29, electronic record means information that is created or retained in a digital format. Electronic records must follow the same retention schedules as records in any other medium.

Artifact: Objects with cultural or historical interest

Records Custodian: The employee designated by the director, or other political bureau head of any state agency, to represent the agency when requesting or returning records to or from the Records Center. The Records Center will only communicate with the designated Records Custodian. The Records Custodian is also the recipient of the disposal lists when they are distributed to the agencies. In the event of a special request, the Records Custodian shall communicate to the Records Center staff the name of the person who will pick up the record.

Records Groups or Records Series: Groups of records which document similar actions, decisions, or filings.

Records Manager: The State Records Manager of the NH Department of State's Division of Archives and Records Management or any person appointed by the Director of the Division of Archives and Records Management to perform any task ordinarily performed by the State Records Manager.

Researcher: Any person seeking information from the State Archives in person or in writing.

Retention Schedule: A pre-determined schedule for keeping a record from the time of its creation until its disposition. Planned steps in a schedule may include transfer from the creating agency to the Records Center, reformatting (such as microfilming or scanning), opening of confidential records, and disposition.

Part I: Management of the State's Archival Records

Format of Archival Records:

Archives may be kept in any format deemed to have a long-term life span but, whatever format is used, the records shall be transformable to at least one other format if necessary for use and/or for permanent preservation. Preservation methods evolve over time: the Archivist refers to the standards put forth by the National Archives and Records Administration.

Archival Processing:

Records that come to the Records Center as an unorganized group, or collection, shall be sorted by date of record creation and/or by type of record, as deemed appropriate by the State Archivist. Processing indicates each document will be separately handled at one or more points in the sorting and arrangement of the documents so that they can be inventoried, and perhaps indexed, and made available for research. This establishes a meaningful order to the record and allows for determination of its authenticity and authority.

The processing of a collection usually requires the following steps:

- 1) Sorting the documents or materials
- 2) Cleaning each as necessary
- 3) Encapsulating each document as necessary
- 4) Placing like documents in folders
- 5) Labeling each folder
- 6) Indicating on the folder the number of documents inside
- 7) Boxing the folders or materials
- 8) Labeling the box
- 9) Placing the box identifier on each folder
- 10) Numbering the folders as they are boxed
- 11) Indicating the number of folders on the box label
- 12) Creating a finding aid for the collection

Archival Storage:

Once sorted, archival records of paper, parchment, or linen will be placed into acid-free file folders. The file folders are then placed into archival document cases or map drawers or archival tubes or other archival containers depending on the size and structure of the document. As the folders are placed into the containers, they are marked with the container identification number and a folder-sequence number for inside that container.

Each folder displays the number of items [e.g., 7 items] enclosed in that folder. The document containers have an identification structure consisting of a brief description of the contents and a unique identification number for each container [drawer, or tube, or etc.] The label of each container displays the name of the repository [NH Division of Archives & Records Management].

To facilitate refiling, each container displays the location identifier where that container is stored.

Finding Aid:

A finding aid should be created briefly describing the contents of each collection. As resources allow, it is a good practice to index individual documents as to individual names, places, and subjects that occur in the documents.

The inventories and the indexes thus created are available in the Research Room for public use.

As resources allow, there should be a central overall guide to the archival collection that can be made available online for worldwide consumption.

Archival Retrieval:

The researcher will tell the research room attendant the record that the researcher wishes to see. The attendant or researcher shall fill out a request slip, and the attendant will leave it in the place where the record was pulled.

When a researcher is finished with the archival record, the researcher shall return the record to the attendant. The attendant will affirm that all records have been returned by counting the items or pages inside the folder, box, tube, or other storage receptacle to match to the number indicated to have been in the folder at the time of processing.

Should any discrepancy appear and not be immediately reconciled, the researcher will be asked to wait to talk with the State Archivist or the State Records Manager.

Care of Archival Records:

Archival documents on paper, parchment, or linen are kept at temperatures averaging 5 degrees above or below 65 degrees Fahrenheit and at a humidity of 35% to 45% \pm 5%. Stability of temperature and humidity is the most significant factor in preservation. This keeps the fibers from flexing with extreme conditions and thus keeps the documents stronger, less likely to tear or deteriorate. They are also kept away from both natural and artificial light to the extent possible, which can cause breakdown of fiber. UV filters are installed on electric lights and other light sources.

Master microfilm, microfiche, and videotapes are kept at an average temperature of 35 degrees Fahrenheit and at a humidity of about 35% \pm 5%. This keeps the polyethylene base from breaking down and prevents deterioration of the silver emulsion film which creates the images.

Climate Control, Fire Alarms and Suppression, Security:

The Archives Building has state-of-the-art climate controls, fire alarms, fire suppression, and security systems to ensure long-term preservation of the state's records.

Encapsulation:

To the extent that human and financial resources permit, fragile archival documents are encapsulated in polypropylene or polyester sleeves. This protects documents from oil on human hands as well as from tears or other hazards while being handled by archival staff and/or researchers. It also helps maintain the stability of the document while stored upright in a file folder in a document case or box.

Conservation/Restoration:

To the extent funds are available, records of historic significance that are in a deteriorated condition will be professionally treated and restored by outside experts. The consultants will submit a report, kept with the document, of the details of when the treatment was made, materials used, and what conservation or preservation actions were performed on the document.

Scanning/Imaging:

Scanning and imaging of documents to create electronic records is highly useful for public accessibility but, despite considerable efforts on the part of national archival experts, not yet considered a reliable methodology for long term preservation. The NH Division of Archives and Records Management supports, to extent resources allow, scanning and imaging of archival documents for use by the public, while retaining originals for long term preservation. This includes efforts underway to scan legislative records for public access. The transfer of scanned images or data to microfilm is encouraged for documents needing longer terms of storage.

Microfilming:

Given the 500-year shelf life of properly created microfilm, this technology is a time-proven means to support records preservation. Originals and paper copies are, however, usually retained. The Archives Building has a designated microfilm storage facility designed to meet nationally recognized standards. NH local governments are invited to forward copies of microfilm of their permanent records for backup storage in the state archives micrographics storage vault.

Photographs:

The State Archives preserves photographs owned by the State that have permanent historical value.

Artifacts:

The State Archives includes a small number of artifacts of historic value owned by the State.

Part II: Management of the State's Non-Archival Records

Retention Schedules:

Retention schedules describe when defined actions take place with the records in relation to a trigger event, such as the creation of a document, or closure of a file. These pre-defined actions may include when the record is transferred from the agency to the records center, when the record is scanned or microfilmed, when electronic records must be migrated to newer versions of software or new storage medium, when the record may be destroyed, or when the record will become an archival record available for public research.

To create a retention schedule, the agency must consider its business workflow, identify the types of records ("records groups" or "records series") it creates, understand the reasons why the records are created and kept, and decide when the agency no longer needs a record of that type or group. The agency should consider the retention of records from the standpoint of financial, legal, and referential (historical) considerations.

Per RSA 5:33, agency heads submit to the director, in accordance with the standards established in rules adopted under RSA 5:40, schedules proposing the length of time each state record series warrants retention for administrative, legal, or fiscal purposes after it has been received by the agency. The head of each agency shall submit lists of state records in their custody that are of permanent and historical value to the state. They shall likewise submit lists of state records in their custody that are not needed in the transaction of current business and that do not have sufficient administrative, legal, or fiscal value to warrant their further keeping. The Division of Archives and Records Management retains all transfer lists and disposal memos.

A well-crafted retention schedule includes a description of the kinds of documents contained within a file of that record group. It also identifies all statutes, rules, or regulations that mandate or affect the retention of that type of record. Retentions schedules should be revised to accommodate changes in law, workflow, or experience of the agency.

The retention schedule stipulates how long a record is considered active. Active records should be kept at the agency. When a record is considered inactive by the agency, the records may be boxed and transferred to the Records Center for storage. Active records may not be transferred to the Records Center. The State Records Manager may determine that a record group needs to be kept longer at the agency and may return records which have been transferred to the Records Center prematurely.

Transferring New Record Boxes to the Records Center:

The agency will estimate how many boxes will be needed and request labels from State Records Manager, who will issue labels with unique box numbers to identify the boxes.

The agency will also order boxes approved by the Director of the Division of Archives and Records Management. The approved boxes are Paige Miracle Boxes #15 or #16, and these are available from NH Correctional Industries Print Shop.

When the agency receives the boxes and labels, the agency then begins packing the records in the boxes. Labels must be applied to the front, lower-left corner (according to the cover letter arriving with the labels). The records are placed in folders, with identification along the top. Records stored in 3-ring binders must be removed from the binders. Records in "hanging files" must have the hangers removed (or changed to non-hanging folders at the option of the agency). These items damage the integrity of the box, change its shape, and will not allow the boxes to properly be stored on the shelves at Archives and Records.

All folders must be placed in the box facing forward (or, if a legal sized folder, placed facing left) in a logical order (for example, alphabetical, numerical, or chronological). About 2-3" of space must be left in the box (enough to insert your hand), and no writing or other labels should be found on the outside of the box. The agency will then complete the transfer list and send it to the State Records Manager to have the data input into our software. The agency should then store the boxes in a secure, water-proof, and convenient location until the State Archives is able to pick up the boxes.

Agencies cannot send additional documents or files needing to be placed with related documents in boxes previously sent to the Records Center, although it may be done in extraordinary cases at the discretion of the State Records Manager and the Director of Archives and Records Management. The Records Center staff refer to this as "interfiling." If the volume of interfiling becomes excessive or the files no longer fit in the box in the view of the Records Manager, the boxes will be permanently returned to the agency.

Archives and Records is implementing new records management system. This new system will allow agencies to print their own labels. Once the new records management system is in place, agencies shall follow these procedures:

Agencies will still pack their boxes of records in the same fashion and maintain indices for their records. Information on each box will be entered by the designated records custodian into the new records management system online through a web-based portal, instead of via a transfer list. Once Archives and Records staff approves the box in the new system, then the agency can print out the labels assigned to the box that agency created or request them from the State Records Manager. The agency should then store the boxes in a secure, water-proof, and convenient location until the State Archives is able to pick up the boxes.

Circulation:

Agencies storing records at the Record Center have responsibilities, specifically: (1) they have record of all files and in which box each file is stored and (2) in the event of a public request for information in those files, the agency will request that the file be

returned to the agency and then make any appropriate information from that file available to the person making the request. Agencies cannot send public researchers to the Archives to review agency files.

If requests for files from certain boxes become too frequent, those boxes may be returned permanently to the agency at the discretion of the Records Manager and the Director of Archives and Records Management.

To request files (or entire boxes) be returned to the agency, the Records Custodian should send an email to archives@sos.nh.gov. The communication will contain the following information plainly legible:

- State Agency Name
- Agency Location
- Agency Code (Division)
- Name of the Records Custodian
- Records Custodian's Phone Number
- Name or File Identification
- Number of the Box Containing the file

Additional information may also be included, if it assists the agency, but will not be considered by the Records Center staff.

The Records Center staff will generally deliver records within the Concord city limits every two business days to the Records Custodian, who is then expected to forward the record to the appropriate user. Exceptions to the two-day window include holidays and (rarely) weather related delays. Records Center staff will communicate this with requestors. If the record cannot be found, the Records Custodian will receive a "no find" report or other communication. If a Records Custodian receives a record that does not belong to their agency, they are asked to call the Records Manager as soon as possible. Records for agencies outside the Concord city limits are generally mailed through the United State Postal Service.

On rare occasions, agencies need a record sooner than two days. The Records Center staff is not obligated to fulfill such a request, but attempt to comply with the agency needs to the extent feasible. If special requests become too common, the boxes of records will be permanently returned to the agency at the discretion of the State Records Manager and the Director of the Division of Archives and Records Management.

For special requests, agencies must email the required information above with the addition of the words "EXPEDITED REQUEST" in the subject line. The agency is then expected to call the Records Manager to confirm this request. The agency will then wait until the Record Center staff calls the Records Custodian to notify them that the record is ready for pick-up at the Records Center. The Records Custodian will identify which authorized person will pick up the special request. That person will present photo

identification, if unknown to Records Center staff. The file will not be given to any person who has not been so identified, or who doesn't have a photo ID. Unannounced visitors or agency employees requesting to see agency records will not be admitted.

Disposition:

The Records Manager will annually prepare a list of boxes of records eligible for disposal and send a list to each agency. These will be sent to the Records Custodian. It is the responsibility of the agency to review the list carefully, initial each page, and sign the approval statement.

If the agency needs certain records kept longer than the retention period, that box must be clearly marked on the disposal list, and an accompanying letter must explain (1) why the record must not be disposed and (2) the length of additional time that record needs to be kept. The agency is also encouraged to point out records which the agency no longer needs for its work, but which may have value as a historical document and thus may be recognized as having archival status and kept as a permanent record.

Once reviewed and signed, the disposal list must be returned to the Records Manager. The Records Center staff is responsible for the disposal of records maintained at the Records Center. There is no charge to the agency for this service. Failure to respond to the disposal list in a timely manner (within thirty days) will lead to the Records Manager returning the boxes to the agency permanently.

Retaining Agency Records as Permanent Archives:

As outlined above, agencies are encouraged to identify for the State Archivist any document or groups of documents which may have historical value or significance. At the discretion of the State Archivist, the Archives may accept some or all of these records for permanent retention. All such documents will be made available to public researchers, unless otherwise stipulated in the Archives sections of this document.

All agency records stored in the Records Center over 70 years from the date the record was created, automatically transfer to the control of the State Archivist, and will be made available for agency and public research. Exceptions to this may be codified in the retention schedules if accepted by both the agency and the Director of the Division of Archives and Records Management.

Part III: Research and Public Access

Access to State Records:

Archival records, legislative records, and election records can be viewed at the State Archives building. Requests for access to most other state records (whether stored at the State Archives building or located at the individual agency) must be addressed to the agency that created those records (see section titled "Circulation").

Hours of Research:

The Archives Building's Research Room is open to the public Monday through Friday, except state holidays, from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

Decorum in the Research Room:

Users must maintain a low level of noise consistent with a public research area. Cell phones must be placed on silent mode upon entering the research room.

Use of Records:

To ensure the long-term preservation of records, researchers must observe the following guidelines. These are designed to provide records security, care, and protection in accordance with professional archival standards:

1. All personal belongings are to be secured in a locker outside of the Research Room.
2. Registration is required for all researchers.
3. No food or drink is allowed in the Research Room.
4. Wash hands prior to using records. Researchers must keep hands clean and free from any substance that could stain or damage records or their containers. This includes food, ink, toner, tobacco, hand lotion, hand sanitizer, and Tacky Finger fingertip moistener or similar products which cannot be used or brought into the room. Please do not lick or otherwise moisten fingers.
5. If working with multiple boxes of records, researchers may only use one cart at a time, one box at a time, one folder at a time, and one file at a time to prevent misplacement of records within containers.
6. Researchers must always keep records in their original order and never attempt to rearrange or correct records. Researchers should notify a staff member if they find a misplaced document or file.
7. Researchers are responsible for returning records to the appropriate container and must use a placeholder when removing files/folders from containers to keep records in order. Researchers should remove any placeholders when they are finished using the records.
8. Researchers should not rest, lean, or otherwise exert pressure on records or their containers. Researchers should avoid having hanging identification badges and/or dangling jewelry or clothing (i.e., scarves) come into contact with records.
9. Researchers should handle all records carefully. Volumes should not be forced open or subjected to pressure that will damage bindings and text blocks. Books should be properly supported when being handled. Researchers may not back-roll, back-fold, or "pop" creases in records in attempts to open and flatten them.
10. Do not write on any of the records. Special care is required when consulting records, and it is required that you use a pencil, rather than a pen, for any note taking.

11. Avoid all use of sticky notes, tape, rubber bands, paper clips, etc. on the records. If you find any of these on records, alert the Research Room staff. Do not attempt to remove these yourself.
12. Notify staff if you find items in disrepair. Do not attempt to clean or repair records yourself.
13. Use of flash photography is strictly prohibited.
14. Researchers may not remove any records from the Research Room.
15. Return all records to the Research Room attendant to reshelve.
16. Record storage areas are closed to the public. Staff will retrieve materials as requested.

Copying and Microfilming Policy:

Photocopying and use of handheld scanners may damage records and are only allowed with permission of the Archives staff. Non-flash photography is allowed. A photocopier is available, when appropriate, and copies can be made for a nominal fee.

Printing from Microfilm:

Printing from microfilm is available for a nominal fee.

Finding Aids:

For some records, such as military history, indices and inventories are available to assist researchers in their records searches. Archives staff in the research room are available to direct researchers to the available resources.

Research Materials:

The research room contains some commonly used reference works to assist researchers.

Wireless Internet Access:

To facilitate research, wireless internet access is available in the research room, and researchers can obtain a password from the State Archives staff. The research room is not an appropriate venue for people who wish to access the internet for general use.

Part IV: Affiliated State Boards and Additional Information

State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB):

This board was established under RSA 5:42 to: (1) sponsor surveys regarding the condition and needs of historical records in the state (2) solicit and develop plans for historical records projects (3) review and make recommendations regarding historical

records projects proposed by institutions in the state (4) develop and revise state plans for historical records projects according to established priorities (5) review the operation and progress of approved historical records projects in the state financed by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Municipal Records Board (MRB):

This board was established under RSA 33-A to advise the Secretary of State on standards and procedures for the effective and efficient management of municipal records, including standards and procedures that govern the retention, preservation, and disposition of municipal records. RSA 33-A:3-a guides municipalities on the disposition and retention schedules established by the Municipal Records Board.

Part V: Notice

These procedures describe the most common situations, but good archival and records management practice requires flexibility and judgment to respond to whatever situation arises.

For any questions about this Procedure Manual, please contact:

Ashley Miller, State Archivist
Archives and Records Management
9 Ratification Way
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 271-2236
archives@sos.nh.gov

Approved by Governor and Council November 29, 2023.